

NND 969045

By SDT/RSW Date 7/23/98

rs:ag

Officer)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: February 17, 1972

SUBJECT: Tunisian-US Relations

PARTICIPANTS: Ambassador El Goulli  
Tunisian Ambassador  
Mohamed Azouz Ennifar  
First Secretary of Embassy  
David D. Newsom  
Assistant Secretary  
for African Affairs  
Michael V. Connors  
Country Officer for Tunisia

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FEB 28 1972

Ambassador El Goulli said that he was calling to express his deep personal thanks to Mr. Newsom for all that he and Secretary Rogers did in arranging for him to deliver personally to President Nixon the letter from President Bourguiba. El Goulli said that President Nixon received him with special warmth, emphasizing that President Bourguiba was his good friend.

Ambassador El Goulli said that President Nixon's willingness to receive him, even though he was busy preparing for his trip to Peking, constituted a symbolic gesture which would be very important to President Bourguiba. El Goulli said that it was clear in his brief conversation with President Nixon, that the President understands President Bourguiba's concern for security in the Mediterranean and in North Africa, especially the problem of Soviet infiltration. (El Goulli remarked parenthetically that President Nixon has been kept fully advised by the White House staff of Bourguiba's concerns.)

Internal Security. El Goulli said that his welcome at the White House demonstrates that there is good will toward Tunisia here in Washington. In this connection the Ambassador expressed hope that the US would be able to provide help in response to Tunisia's request for internal security assistance. Mr. Newsom stressed that there is indeed good will in the USG toward its

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friends. He noted, however, that there is a growing problem in how the US can manifest this goodwill when its means to help are more limited. For example, the Congress has removed from the assistance bill all proposed authorizations for public safety. In these circumstances, requests for internal security assistance raise some very difficult problems. As for Tunisia's request, we expect to know in the next few days how we might best resolve our mutual problems.

Military Assistance. The Ambassador raised the question of military assistance, expressing hope that beyond what was provided by the US last year, Tunisia would receive more in the future. El Goulli said that it was generally understood when the US assistance package was delivered in the Spring of 1971 that Tunisia would continue to receive help. Mr. Newsom said that the US would certainly do what it could to help. He noted, however, that at the present time there is a difference of about \$50 million in the amounts of overall, world-wide military assistance that the Senate and the House are prepared to provide. Given existing US commitments in Indo-China, should the lesser amount be approved, there would be difficult problems. El Goulli said that he fully understood this problem but expressed hope that since Tunisia's needs are so small -- perhaps only a few million dollars -- the US would be able to find a way to help. He suggested that since there are already several assistance programs in Tunisia, perhaps some mutually advantageous arrangement could be worked out. Mr. Newsom agreed that we should try to match our mutual possibilities. He added that the Ambassador should be assured that Tunisia will remain one of the five countries in Africa which will continue to receive military assistance - the precise amount to be worked out here in Washington, considering overall availabilities, etc.

Mr. Newsom concluded by informing El Goulli that the serious problems affecting the overall US assistance effort would require the US to inform its friends that it could no longer do as much as it has done in the past. This could, if misunderstood, perhaps lead our friends to question whether there might be changes in our basic attitude toward them. Mr. Newsom stressed that our friends should understand that the issue is not one of basic relationships but of resources.

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*pm*  
AF - Mr. Newsom

AF/N - Mr. *Odell*

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